

THE CONCEPT OF THE SUPERMAN IN SHAKESPEARE'S AND SHAW'S WORKS

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The study deals with the complex and ambiguous criticism that Bernard Shaw professed for the concept of hero and superman in the classic and Shakespeare's drama. Throughout Shaw's professional as a critic and playwright, he devoted a great deal of his writings to analyze and decipher Shakespeare's plays for British audiences. Shaw wrote three sets of critical essays on Shakespeare: *The epistolary*, *Our Theatres in the Nineties*, and *The Prefaces*. The article emphasizes not only the evolution in Shaw's Shakespeare criticism, but also the parallelism of that evolution with the awareness of Shaw himself as being a world renowned playwright.

The subject of the man was brought up by Shaw both in his plays especially in man and superman and his articles in the Saturday review. The specific was that in the first case the author dealt with images, artifacts, imagination and on the second one he spoke of concrete representative of his time more of that the fictional of superhero is the image of the man as he has to be and the superman.

The development of drama in Europe in XIX and XX centuries and the emergence of new drama, paved the way for transition this kind of drama to England to be replaced the classic and Shakespearean that was controlled to most of English Productions .

Evolution of drama and theatre led to the changes most of its old elements in order to emphasize the social themes. The writers and critics in England put up in long debates on accepting this type of genre "new drama" and the way of introducing to the audience. Therefore some of critics accused Shaw of being hate to Shakespeare. Actually Shaw was admired in dealing with social issues that he discussed in his plays. Shaw began his work at the end (80-90 years) of the XIX century primarily as a critic of theater, music in his articles. The problem of the man represented in, the hero, the protagonist within social context that was at the centre of Shavian drama.

Shaw also struggled with the morality of Shakespeare's plays, and like Tolstoy he frequently attacked his lack of a significant philosophical purpose in Shakespeare's works. Though he at times acknowledged the dramatist's artistic prowess, praising his facility with language and rhythm, he was less gracious when it came to the ethical content (or lack thereof) espoused in the plays. Shaw believed that 'in drama, as in all art, form is one thing and content another', and so while he could admire Shakespeare's aesthetic skill, he felt free to condemn his shallow content.[7] 'Shakespeare's weakness', he wrote, 'lies in his complete deficiency in that highest sphere of thought, in which poetry embraces religion, philosophy, morality [...] . [H]is characters have no religion, no politics, no conscience, no hope, no convictions of any sort'

The concept of superman was suggested by F. Nietzsche. Because of Shaw was influenced with Nietzsche's philosophy he tried to generalize the meaning of modern hero in drama. Shaw paraphrased different images of hero in one called it "the superman". Shawian Superman is the hero of modern epoch who is a real man with knowledge and the answer to the social problems that drama of XX century dealt with.

Drama of XX century brings philosophical images to the theatre. The object of twentieth century drama wasn't limited to entertainment or comedy scenes. Bernard Shaw went further to develop the concept of individual and man. In this step Shaw turned over on the classic traditional concept and perception of the man, hero, super hero, strong man to create anew concept of philosophical superman on the stage.

Images of super heroes or super man were personified in classic and Shakespearean drama within historical characters (Caesar and Richard III) and the fictional characters that were the product of Shakespearean imagination or the character with supernatural elements «Prospero». Shaw inherited the Shakespearean way characterization of historical figures for instance «Don Juan» he put this historical image into social historical context in play *man and superman*. he showed the eternal image can be functioned in a new way of which was no one can expect

him inferiority with like these character, because of the great disparity between what was represented by this character and what he thinks is usually socialist writer like Shaw.

Shakespeare tried to introduce in his drama a sort of” superman “according to his understanding to the meaning of strength which mostly was derived from ancient literature Aristotle or Plato. Hence the definition of the Superman is rather unspecified; some have interpreted a “superman” to be someone who is simply superior in strength and Physical or supernatural ability. And this is exactly what appeared in Shakespearean drama Prospero’s power in *The tempest*. But in the 20th century the scientific revolution and psychological theories eradicated on the beliefs in Supernatural powers and focused on the Mind and mental abilities in Man to create from him a superman. So that the definition of the superman have changed here in Shaw’s perception to the concepts, he stated in most of his works that Superman who is simply superior in strength and mental ability.

The birth of the superman is not an accident but is the result of a creative and gradual evolutionary process . The philosophical concept of superman created by Nietzsche In his 1883 novel *Thus Spoke Zarathustra* .It might be sensible to conceive that Nietzsche had something in his mind about how a man should be more than just *human-all-too-human*, regardless if he was one or not. All these ideas had been pondered on and developed through all his works. The concept then seems to reveal much about the way Nietzsche saw life. The experience and talents of shaws perceptions to the inherited literary works gave him better chances to develop the drama in the 20th century and then lots of critic became compare him with great writers that preceded him. For instance Singh D.K in his book *The idea of the superman in the plays of G.B.* Singh claimed that Shaw represented the idea of the superman in many of his play after the play “Man and Superman “in 1903. He argued that Shavian superman near to be in similar to the Nietzsche’s one he stated” His doctrine of Superman bears a close stamp o similarity with that of Nietzsche. But there is a difference between George Bernard Shaw and Nietzsche “ [4,p2].

To not forgetting here we are talking about a work of art (theater), for George Bernard Shaw, not on the intellectual text, we hasten to say that these ideas are in-depth, but it is the basis subject to one of the most important plays of Shaw: «Man and Superman». To compare the main theme Shavian drama to Shakespearean it's easy to do through their heroes in their plays and the kind of hero. It's clearly to recognize the type of Shakespearean heroes through the historical characters that characterized in his drama. But the meaning of hero becomes rather different to the drama of 20th century or Shavian.

Shakespeare and Shaw explored the possibilities and downfalls of leadership within the character of “superman. The histories of the English Kings are certainly concerned with questions of leadership and justice under a nation's government, but their Tudor world dictates a religious element that complicates the power struggles. Shakespeare's *Richard III* is obviously a political work that explained the position of Strong Man and his desire of domination but Shakespeare gave some justification to his strongman that is born out of his personal psychology more than from a systematic political ideology.

Although Shakespeare's most infamous Machiavellian character is Richard III, the model of the political schemer out to secure his own position can be detected most overtly in the characters of Iago (Othello), Edmund (King Lear), and Claudius (Hamlet), and to a lesser extent in the characters of Hamlet himself and Augustus Caesar in Antony and Cleopatra.

Shaw was in contrary to Shakespeare's political views and he joined the newly formed Fabian Society, which accorded with his belief that reform should be gradual and induced by peaceful means rather than by outright revolution [3, p85]. Shaw was antiviolenence means to change in policy. So his character in plays seemed to be not aggressive in their uprising against injustice so he follows Karl Marx in achieving his affairs.

Another historical leader and character was written in Shakespeare's play *Julius Caesar*. The playwrights took part with the same character “Caesar” but they characterized it differently Shaw presented us a very strong character with power

but with a good mind and a good person and was differed from Richard or Henry at least in one major respect: Julius Caesar, whether through honest sincerity of strategic manipulation, refused a crown when it was offered him. So naturally discussion here Shakespeare's impression on Rome was different of Shaw's one.

Shaw in his Preface to *Three Plays for Puritans* (*Caesar and Cleopatra* is one of them) "The playgoer may reasonably ask to have historical events and persons presented to him in the light of his own time." And that time was clearly exhibiting the seesaw of political careers[6]. If Shakespeare was intending his creation to be a model for admirable political leaders everywhere, as Shaw was; he certainly had little hope for a sound and reasonable future society. Shaw's Caesar knows he'll inevitably be a victim of the historical Grand Mechanism, but rationally hopes he can leave society at least a little better than how he found it. Shakespeare's Caesar is a bundle of weaknesses and weirdness's His concern seems to be more with his personal status than with Rome's prosperity. He reveals his unstable neediness in his neurotic habit of referring to himself in the third person:

Caesar should be a beast without a heart

If he should stay at home today for fear.

No, Caesar shall not. Danger knows full well[1, Act2.2.42-48]

Shakespeare's Caesar has no onstage personal connections. His wife Calpurnia dreams of blood emanating from Caesar's statue – not from the man himself; and his mythical "son" [1]. Brutus barely speaks with him in the play, except to tell him the time, during the assassination scene, and briefly confront Caesar's ghost when it visits Brutus's tent on the eve of the battle of Philippi. In this point critics readers can be notice the different of thoughts between Shaw and Shakespeare and these thoughts were reflected on their characters in their plays. For instance Shakespeare believed in supernatural element and appeared many with his Caesar but Shaw were believe just in reality and that was the purpose when he created real Caesar in modern time.

Shakespeare didn't conceive of his tragedy in Aristotelian terms – that is, as a tragedy of the fall of a flawed great man. Shaw realized that this “balanced dramatic structure” left Shakespeare open to appropriation by both the establishment, and those in rebellion against it.

From the opening of his improvement play, Shaw allows his Caesar a symbolic, almost other-worldly quality to this living, active, questing man. But an isolated man, chosen by History and set apart from the general population, for what he and his playwright feel to be greater things, in the governmental realm. Shaw's Caesar strolls through the Egyptian desert, lonely and lost in thought, and finds himself before the Sphinx. And this is explained the meaning of freedom according to the two playwright and method of applying this freedom in state by the “superman”.

The reason behind the differentiate between the two playwrights in creating their superman was the time and the genre of literary work and that could be very clear in the character of Caesar in both plays .Shakespeare's play is frequently performed today, retaining its theatrical power in a good production, whereas Shaw's is an unwieldy curiosity telling us more about 1898 than about 44 BC. It is the beginning of a series of turning points in Shaw's personal philosophy concerning leadership. And while it's theatrical attraction may be less marketable than Shakespeare's – though neither of them appears very frequently in the commercial theatre, rather usually depending upon the subsidized festival theatres for their venues – and the very natures of the two plays being so different. There is an overall sense in which they have an important political concept in common.

An interesting commentary on Shaw's reading of Shakespeare's *Julius Caesar*, and the serious flaws Shaw found in it, was created in America in 1937, the year of Shaw's rewrite of *Cymbeline*, and in the midst of the time when Shaw was modifying his approval of the theoretical Fascist solution to societal chaos, on his way to complete renunciation of such solutions. Orson Welles agreed with Shaw's

judgment that *Julius Caesar* is "the most splendidly written political melodrama we possess" [6]. Shaw writes in his "Better than Shakespeare?" Preface to *Caesar and Cleopatra* [6]. And Welles will use the 1930s political vocabulary of Shaw's fascination with the surging Strong Men in his treatment of *Caesar* – but in a diametrically opposite vision. Shakespeare's mysterious neutrality, as described by Shapiro is so different from the polemicism of artists such as Shaw or Welles, permits such opposite interpretations of the same text [6].

Shavian drama became the main source to the English theatre in 20th century and Shaw appears to be a champion of the causes of human problems. He seems to have caught the knack of delving deep into problems of human life. He seems to have adapted the weapon of non-violence for achieving the mission of his life like. And this is the distinction between Shakespeare's heroes "the man" tools and Shavian to achieve their goals.

The results:-

- 1- In order to introduce the ideal strongman or superman both Shakespeare and Shaw appealed to the historical characters in their works "Caesar, Richard III, Prospero" in Shakespeare's plays and "Caesar, Don Juan" in Shaw's plays
- 2- The ancient sources were Shakespearean inspiration to produce Superman while Nietzschean was Shavian one.
- 3- Machiavellian *The Prince* was the same source for Shakespeare their political historical views but Fabians and Marxism was for Shaw's political views.
- 4- The playwrights dealt with different historical characters but with different aims. The state man in Shakespeare was a strong man with supernatural features, but with Shavian was more natural and real.
- 5- Shaw and Shakespeare developed the similar themes such as leadership in their plays but they chose different ways Shakespeare supported his understanding to the leading with authority and power but Shavian represented it with wisdom especially in different image of Caesar in Shakespeare and Shaw.

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